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Bruce G. Leighton, Captain, USNR
(Naval Aviator #40)

Bruce Gardner Leighton was born in Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania, on June 18, 1892, son of Mr. and Mrs. James G. Leighton. Appointed to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from Pennsylvania, he entered on June 26, 1909, and was graduated with distinction and commissioned Ensign on June 6, 1913. He resigned his commission as Lieutenant Commander on November 20, 1928, and accepted a commission in the same rank in the Naval Reserve in March of the following year. When called to active duty during World War II he was promoted to the rank of Captain to date from March 17, 1943. He was placed on the Retired List on August 1, 1946, having been relieved of all active duty on May 7, 1946.

After graduation from, the Naval Academy in June 1913. He was assigned to the USS *North Dakota*, operating with the Atlantic Fleet, and in 1914 was with the Fleet landing force at Vera Cruz during the Mexican Campaign. For two years thereafter he served first as a repair officer in the submarine divisions of the Atlantic Fleet at Norfolk, Virginia, and later as Engineer Officer of the submarine tender *Tallahassee*. In 1916-1917 he was a student aviator at the Naval Aeronautic Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he qualified as Naval Aviator #40 in April 1917. He remained on duty at Pensacola until January 1918, when he reported for brief temporary duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

During the latter months of World War I, he served as Executive Officer of the Naval Air Station, Killingholme, England, the largest naval air unit in the North Sea Area, engaged in anti-submarine operations. In April 1919, following the Armistice, he returned to the United States for duty on the USS *Shawmut*, a unit of Squadron One, Mine Detachment, Atlantic Fleet, and from March 1920 he served as her Gunnery Officer. The *Shawmut* later served as flagship of Commander Air Detachment, Atlantic Fleet, and while on duty as her Gunnery Officer, he organized and commanded

patrol plane squadrons of the U. S. Fleet. This was the first organized aviation unit to operate continuously as an integral part of the Battle Fleet, and pioneered the early development of joint surface fleet and air operations,

In November 1920 he returned to the Navy Department to serve for four years, first in the Bureau of Engineering, later in the Bureau of Aeronautics as Chief of the Power Plant Design Division. In the latter assignment he had additional duty as Navy Representative on the Power Plants Committee of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics.

In June 1924 he reported as Aide on the Staff of Commander Light Cruiser Divisions (USS *Richmond*), and in that duty organized and simultaneously commanded Observation Plane Squadron 3, the first squadron to operate regularly from shipborne catapults on extended fleet maneuvers.

In April 1925 he was transferred to the staff of Commander, Scouting Fleet, (USS *Wyoming*) and served for more than a year as Aide and Fleet Aviation Officer. In August 1926 he returned to the Navy Department for a tour of duty as Aide to the Secretary of the Navy for Aeronautics. During that period he pioneered the development of dive-bombing tactics and their adoption as a major tactic of fleet air forces. In 1927 he was assigned duty as Chief of the Plans Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, with additional duty in the War Plans Division of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. He served there until his resignation, effective November 30, 1928.

As a civilian he continued in the aeronautical field from 1928 to 1937 with Curtiss Wright, first as Vice President of Wright Aeronautical Corporation, Curtiss A. and M. Company, Curtiss Wright Export Corporation, and from 1933 to 1936 represented his firm's interests as European representative, in contact with civil-military aircraft developments throughout Europe. Early in 1937 he was engaged in aircraft manufacture and the training of Chinese engineers and factory personnel as an executive of the Intercontinent Cooperation and the Central Aircraft Manufacturing Company.

After the Japanese invasion of Shanghai in 1937, his factory was forced out of Hankow. He reestablished it at Loiwing in Yunman Province near the Burma border in 1938 with the entry through Rangoon and Burma. With the fall of Canton this avenue was the sole entry for aircraft into China. During 1937-1938 he operated auxiliary mobile repair and maintenance units for the Chinese Air Forces in several of the larger cities and was in active personal charge of his firm's Chinese operations until the end of 1939.

He returned to the United States in 1940 to operate a subsidiary manufacturing company in Miami, Florida. At the request of the Secretary of the Navy, he actively participated in 1941, in recruiting and aiding in the transportation to China of pilots and mechanics for Naval Reserve Aviation

units commanded by General Claire Chennault. On leave from the Intercontinent Cooperation from August 1942 to March 1943, he was Assistant Deputy Director of the Aircraft Production Division of the War Production Board, and also served in liaison activities with the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department.

Recalled to active duty on March 20, 1943, and promoted to the rank of Captain, to date from March 16, 1943, he served as Production Executive of the Office of the Bureau of Aeronautics General Representative, Western District, organizing and supervising activities of the Bureau of Aeronautics field offices in the control of aircraft production programs for the Navy in all plants in the Western half of the United States. He was ordered relieved of active duty on May 7, 1946, pending his retirement on August 1, 1946.

Captain Leighton received a Letter of Commendation, with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon, from the Secretary of the Navy "For especially commendable service from May 17, 1945 to September 15, 1945, as a member of the Inter-Departmental Ad Hoc Committee to study and make recommendations on what to do to control Germany's power and capacity to make war in the future. He also has the World War I Victory Medal, Overseas Clasp; the American Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

Captain Leighton was married to Mrs. Ethel Major Leighton. They had a son, Bruce G. Jr., and a daughter, Janet Leighton.

Chronological List of Duty Stations

6/09-7/13	U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD.
6/7/13	Commissioned Ensign.
7/13-2/15	USS <i>North Dakota</i> .
2/15-8/15	Receiving Ship Norfolk, Virginia.
8/15-3/16	USS <i>Tallahassee</i> .
3/16-1/18	Naval Aeronautic Station, Pensacola, FL.
1/18-4/18	Naval Operations, Washington, D. C.
6/18-11/18	Naval Air Station 14 & 15 (S.D.B.S.)
12/18-2/19	Naval Operations, Washington D. C.
2/19-11/19	USS <i>Shawmut</i> .
12/19-8/21	Bureau of Engineering, Washington. D. C.
9/21-6/24	Bureau of Aeronautics, Washington. D. C.
6/24-4/25	Observation Plans Squadron THREE.
4/25-7/26	Scouting Fleet (USS <i>Wyoming</i>).
7/26-6/27	Office of Assistant Secretary of Navy for Aeronautics, Washington D. C.
6/27-11/28	Bureau of Aeronautics.
11/30/28	Resignation from U. S. Navy.
3/19/29	Accepted appointment as LCDR, USNR.
10/1/41	Placed on the Honorary-Retired List.
4/43	Office General Inspector of Naval Aircraft Western District, Los Angeles, California.
3/44	Aircraft Resources Central Office, San Diego, California.
3/44-5/45	Bureau of Aeronautics, Western Division
5/45-6/46	Naval Operations, Washington, D. C.
8/1/46	Placed on the Retired List.